What the Media Can Do To Make a Difference

◆ **Report consequences.** Use news programming, music videos, children's shows, and other entertainment to report the negative impact that violence against women has on victims and the community.

◆ **Refuse to promote violence.** Adopt industry standards that curtail justifying, glamorizing, sanitizing, or normalizing violence, specifically violence against women.

◆ **Focus on nonviolent images.** Incorporate nonaggressive images and messages when developing products or advertisements.

◆ **Embrace positive programming.** Develop story lines and characters that promote positive attitudes toward women, masculinity, relationships, and nonviolence.

◆ **Inform parents, caregivers, and communities.** Provide easily understood information about managing children's media consumption and teaching media literacy.

◆ **Include victim advocates.** Invite victim advocates to participate in developing consumer education materials and policies against violence.

◆ **Establish partnerships to foster antiviolence education.** Broker partnerships between public education campaign developers and media companies to maximize the reach of violence prevention efforts.

◆ **Support school-based media education programs.** Encourage schools to provide age-appropriate media education and media literacy that target school-aged children.

◆ **Work with the community to promote violence prevention.** Cultivate partnerships with community groups to develop violence prevention initiatives.

◆ **Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration to prevent "new" media crimes.** Work with state and local law enforcement agencies to monitor the Internet for child sexual exploitation, the distribution of child pornography, and stalking.

Chapter 11

Engaging the Media, Advertising, and Entertainment Industries

The media, advertising, and entertainment industries, collectively known as "mass media," are powerful because they penetrate every segment of modern-day society and effectively influence how consumers view themselves, their neighbors, their communities, and the world. Because of daily technological advances, "mass media" denotes outlets beyond newspaper, radio, and television. The scope of media influence now extends to digital spectrum, cable, and satellite technology and the Internet.

For decades, advocates who work to stop sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking have struggled to promote responsible news coverage and win media support. Movies and entertainment television have long exploited these crimes to "entertain." News coverage of violence against women has often been sensational, exploitative, and lacking in serious analysis of the prevalence, costs, and underlying causes of such violence. In fact, until recently, it was not uncommon to see and hear news stories that referred to domestic homicides as "lovers' quarrels" that escalated to murder or that accepted men's aggressive and obsessive pursuit of women. In other cases, the media have used language that perpetuates myths about sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.

In recent years, however, media coverage and depictions of sexual assault and domestic violence have begun to change. Although problems remain, today's media carry more responsible messages about violence against women and conduct more serious analyses of the causes of these crimes and the impact on and cost to communities as a result of these crimes. Public service initiatives that promote community-based programs such as hotlines and shelters are winning broader support. Advocates also have developed campaigns with ambitious new messages that encourage people to speak out against violence and challenge men to cease violent and sexually coercive behaviors.

The media, advertising, and entertainment industries are uniquely positioned to wield their influence to inspire action that will end violence against women. The media can do a tremendous amount to direct victims of violence to services and to affect public attitudes about violence against women in all its forms. These industries also have a duty to report accurately on acts of violence against women. By establishing partnerships with advocacy groups, policymakers, researchers, and other community leaders, the media industry can serve as the catalyst for new and more effective violence prevention messages. Further, under the industry's leadership, current media practices that are harmful to women and girls can be identified and altered.

Although some in the media industry are to be commended for their ongoing efforts to reflect sensitive, diverse, and egalitarian images, others in the media still incorporate images that convey destructive messages. Women's bodies are used as objects to sell products, men and boys are portrayed in aggressive and stereotypical ways, and depictions of physical and sexual violence are glorified. Even implied acts of violence may support the "normalization" or sense of inevitability of violence against women. Clearly, not all

images of violence have the same impact on the attitudes and behavior of society. Programs that convey the negative consequences of violence against women send a much different message than those that objectify women or use violence as a form of entertainment.

The responsible voice of the mass media is critical to communicating that violent behavior is unacceptable. Violence against women, in any of its forms, should never be condoned or romanticized under any circumstances. Although reducing violence in the media is a central goal, messages that promote violence prevention are equally important. Specifically, the media, advertising, and entertainment industries are encouraged to actively support three interconnected strategies:

◆ Demonstrate that portraying violence in the news, advertisements, entertainment and sports programs, children's programming, and other areas has a negative impact.
◆ Refuse to justify, glamorize, sanitize, or normalize violence.
◆ Employ the power of the media, entertainment, and advertising industries to support efforts to end violence against women.

Mass Media

Mass media have the power to help create healthy communities in part by portraying healthy, constructive communities. Nonviolent communities are built on respect, empathy, and shared interests. The reach and scope of the mass media are critical to altering societal norms regarding violence against women. The diverse outlets under the mass-media umbrella allow direct and relevant communication with a range of audiences. Harnessing this significant influence and directing it toward violence prevention is a critical first step toward ending violence against women and girls.

New Media

The Internet and digital spectrum technology have altered communication norms in our culture and offer the exposure necessary to discourage violence against women and girls. By increasing access to confidential resources and information about sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking and by improving law enforcement communication between jurisdictions, these new media are critical to ending violence against women and girls. As with most positive technological developments, potential negative impacts are inherent and should be addressed.

Media Education and Advocacy

Media education and media advocacy alter the relationship between consumers and the media by informing consumers without censoring media. Specifically, media education is designed to inform consumers about how the media operate, including production, distribution, and consumption. Media advocacy uses the media to advance a particular cause or policy initiative.

Media literacy alters how consumers "read" media images and messages, thus affecting the impact that those images and messages have on consumers. Specifically, media literacy reflects the consumer's ability to analyze and evaluate media messages accurately. Media literacy gives consumers the critical information needed to engage in simple interventions such as watching and discussing programs with family and friends, to directly influence the understanding of media violence, and to limit its negative impact.

Outlined below are specific actions that the mass media and related organizations can take to initiate the end of violence against women and girls. The private sector, criminal justice policymakers, Internet service providers, children's advocacy groups, domestic violence and sexual assault advocates, and community stakeholders also can benefit from the actions listed below.

What the Mass Media Can Do

1. Support efforts to reduce children's exposure to media violence.

◆ Provide parents and other caregivers with clear information about the V-Chip—a device programmable by parents that blocks the display of television programs based on assigned ratings— and other tools designed to manage children's media intake.

◆ Select nonviolent male and female role models to endorse products and present nonviolent, nonaggressive images and messages when targeting children in programming or advertising.

◆ Develop story lines, images, characters, programs, and products that promote healthy attitudes toward women, masculinity, relationships, and sexuality.

◆ Work with advocates, parents, and researchers in the fields of sexual assault and domestic violence to promote music, music videos, and music Web sites that reflect values consistent with ending violence against women and girls.

◆ Donate air time to organizations that oppose violence, specifically violence against women.

◆ Establish industry task forces to respond to concerns raised about children and media violence. For example, these task forces can monitor advertising that targets children or explore the consequences of portraying violence against women and girls in music and music videos.

2. Diversify images of women on television and radio to counter traditional stereotypes that perpetuate violence against women.

◆ Provide fair and full coverage of women in politics, sports, business, health, and education.

◆ Enhance programming and news coverage of efforts to end violence against women.

◆ Reflect diversity by continuing to hire women of color as producers, directors, writers, reporters, and expert commentators.

3. Teach media professionals about violence against women and prevention efforts.

◆ Develop or enhance courses offered at educational institutions to include the media's role in ending violence against women.

◆ Inform media professionals by integrating training about violence against women into trade conferences, continuing education courses, newsletters, and other educational outlets.

4. Develop culturally relevant public awareness campaigns on violence against women.

◆ Target populations not typically reached through general outreach, including culturally specific programs, by using tailored language and messengers and a range of delivery mediums. Ensure that media campaigns, messages advocating prevention, and spokespeople resonate in communities with different languages, cultures, and interests.

◆ Focus prevention messages on girls and boys in high school, middle school, and earlier to influence attitudes and behaviors that may last a lifetime.

◆ Increase the number of public education and creative peer education programs on college campuses.

For related recommendations, see Toolkit *chapter "Educating and Mobilizing the Public About Violence Against Women."*

5. Provide media coverage about the incidence, prevalence, and impact of violence against women and the need for comprehensive, coordinated systems and community response.

◆ Provide the full context of violence-related news events such as crimes of self-defense by women to inform the public about the relationship between crimes and violence against women.

◆ Seek commentary from experts who deal with violence against women when reporting on sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking.

◆ Provide community resource information as supplements to news stories about incidents of violence against women.

What New Media Can Do

6. Improve, implement, and evaluate safeguards that protect children from images of violence and other potentially harmful material found on the Internet and other interactive media.

◆ Ensure that safeguards reflect the cognitive and emotional development of children while protecting public and commercial interests and constitutional freedoms.

◆ Encourage parents and other caregivers to monitor children's use of the Internet and other interactive media.

7. Continue to develop and publicize filtering, blocking, labeling, and other mechanisms to allow consumers to voluntarily control access to violent or offensive content.

◆ Collaborate with victim advocates to develop effective tools and consumer education materials that support violence prevention initiatives.

◆ Expand public education campaigns about the availability of such mechanisms.

8. Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration to prevent new media crimes, including child sexual exploitation, the distribution of child pornography, and cyberstalking.

◆ Increase the capacity of state and local law enforcement and criminal justice systems to investigate and prosecute Internet crimes more effectively.

How To Use the Media

9. Develop comprehensive media literacy and media advocacy strategies to encourage prevention-oriented coverage of violence against women and girls in news and entertainment programs.

◆ Work with media advocacy organizations to provide youth-serving organizations with assistance in integrating media education about violence against women into classrooms and other settings.

◆ Encourage local broadcasters and Internet service providers to participate in community projects focused on media literacy.

◆ Work with community action groups to respond to media portrayals of violence against women by offering sponsorship, training, and endorsements.

◆ Organize community members to educate policymakers, state and federal regulators, and telecommunications companies.

◆ Cultivate relationships with local media and encourage coverage of violence prevention.

◆ Write letters to the editor and opinion pieces to communicate antiviolence messages relevant to local communities.

◆ Identify and support survivors of violence who are willing to speak to the media.

◆ Use public-access cable channels to promote the prevention of violence against women.

◆ Enlist college communications programs to engage local community groups and help evaluate the effectiveness of community action activities.

Resources

The Advertising Council
261 Madison Avenue, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10016
Phone: 212–922–1500
Fax: 212–922–1676
Web site: www.adcouncil.org

Each year the Advertising Council coordinates approximately 40 public education and advocacy campaigns that focus on preventive health, education, community well-being, environmental preservation, strengthening families, and enriching children's lives. Advertising Council slogans ("Take a Bite Out of Crime," "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk") and characters (Smokey the

Bear, McGruff the Crime Dog) raise awareness, promote individual action, and save lives.

Benton Foundation
950 18th Street NW.
Washington DC 20006
Phone: 202–638–5770
Fax: 202–638–5771
Web site: www.benton.org

Supporting the public interest use of communications media, the Benton Foundation provides leadership in the emerging communications environment and promotes the value of communications for solving social problems.

Center for Media Education
2120 L Street NW., Suite 200
Washington, DC 20037
Phone: 202–331–7833
Fax: 202–331–7841
Web site: www.cme.org

The Center for Media Education (CME) fosters a quality electronic media culture for children, families, and communities. CME encourages a responsible vision of the digital future, and has been a leader in expanding educational television programming and promoting television and Internet safeguards for youth.

Media Research Center
325 South Patrick Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone: 703–683–9733
Fax: 703–683–9736
Web site: www.mediaresearch.org

The Media Research Center is a media watchdog organization that investigates the prevalence of, reports on, and educates the public about media bias. The Web site provides links to Media Research Center newsletters, special reports, and opinion pieces and information about the Free Market Project (which works to educate the media about the principles of free enterprise) and the Montgomery Internship Program (which teaches youth about balanced journalism).

Mediascope
12711 Ventura Boulevard, Suite 440
Studio City, CA 91604
Phone: 818–508–2080
Fax: 818–508–2088
Web site: www.igc.apc.org/mediascope

Mediascope encourages responsible portrayals in film, television, video games, music, advertising, and on the Internet, providing the creative community, legislators, educators, and parents research tools and information on media ratings, teen sexuality, media violence, substance abuse, and related issues to facilitate social responsibility.

National Advertising Division and Children's Advertising Review Unit
Council of Better Business Bureaus
4200 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 800
Arlington, VA 22203–1838
Phone: 703–276–0100
Fax: 703–525–8277
Web site: www.bbb.org/advertising

The Council of Better Business Bureaus is the umbrella organization for the Better Business Bureau system, which offers business reliability reports, comsumer-business dispute resolution, industry guidelines for truth in advertising, and consumer and business education. The National Advertising Division and Children's Advertising Review Unit promote truthful advertising and monitor media for adherence to truth-in-advertising principles and compliance with local, state, and federal regulations.

National Institute on Media and the Family
606 24th Avenue South, Suite 606
Minneapolis, MN 55454
Phone: 1–888–672–KIDS
Fax: 612–672–4113
Web site: www.mediafamily.org

The National Institute on Media and the Family studies the influence of electronic media on early childhood education, child development, academic performance, culture, and violence. Resources for teachers, parents, and community leaders include media awareness programs; movie, television, and video game content ratings; and tips to help parents and families evaluate their media use.

References

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Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, with local journalists (2000). *Domestic Violence: A Handbook for Journalists.* Warwick, RI: Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Stevens, J. (1997). *Reporting on Violence: A Handbook for Journalists.* Dorfman, L. and Wallack, L. (Eds.) Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Media Studies Group.